

THE PROMISE OF THE PAST.

"It but of fleeting years a score
Since father used to go to bed.
"My son," "time you got to bed.
Come, say good night to all."
Ah, how welcome were the words,
And how they spoiled the fun!
I wasn't tired, but I said:
Our game was not half done.
But time has flown, and I'm a man,
And heavy loads I bear,
For wearily the lagging hours
Drag on, held back by care!
Too long, too long, are now the days,
And things are different quite.
How gladly would I now respond
To father's call each night!
Somehow the thought occurs to me
That this same rule may be run
When I shall find my race is run
And life's bright fires grow cold;
May not the somber messenger
Whose call I now would dread,
Come at the last, my beloved friend,
To bid me to my bed?
—Kansas City Independent.

THE SECRET OF THE ABANDONED SHIP.

By W. Clark Russell.

He was the smallest man I ever saw in my life. He paced the floor quickly with a short lookout step, his hands deep buried in his little pockets. He was a dry and harsh old man, like to a parched pea, with 50 years of seafaring. I called upon this sailor, believing that he alone could solve the mystery, and he answered the instant I inquired if he could do so:
"Yes, sir," and pulled a piece of worn newspaper out of his side pocket.
"This is the piece," he began, "they put in about it. They make her an American. Lie number one. They call her a brig. Lie number two. I ought to know, for I was her second mate."
"She was a black bark of 700 tons belonging to Liverpool, and the piece they put into the papers about her was this," said the little sailor man, putting on a pair of glasses.
"Ten years ago a British merchantman saw a vessel with all sails set, yet something was wrong. They boarded her. Everything was in order, fire burning in the galley, dinner unstarted and scarcely cold, cargo intact, the well dry, no one living or dead was on board. The log had been written up to within a short time of the period of her being boarded. There was not a drop of blood, a lock of hair, a disordered cabin or anything to show the sign of a struggle. From that day not the slightest clew has been obtained. Yet she has been a lucky ship ever since."

"Now," said the little sailor with excitement, slapping the sheet of paper, "I have contradicted this yarn over and over again. I have given the public the truth, and still the papers will insist upon inserting this piece just as if I didn't exist or had no right to speak."
"We had been out a fortnight home-ward bound, when a man in the morning watch, coming aft to me, says:
"There's a queer sight to be seen in the fore-cabin."
"What is it?" said I.
"Bats on the beams."
"The weather was quiet, and I thought I could safely leave the deck for a few minutes, and, going forward, I stepped as requested into the topgal fore-cabin and saw two rats moving about in a strange fashion."

"They seemed to grope and reel, and even as I watched another huge black cat came out from somewhere in the dark, and this beast moved, swayed and clutched at the deck as it crawled slowly."
"The morning light had broken, a good light was made by the fore-cabin lights, and the rats were distinctly visible. Several of the watch on deck stood looking on."

"They appear to me to be blind," said I.
"That's just it, sir," said the man who had called me forward, and, stepping up to the nearest rat, he passed his hand over its eyes, and this he did to the other and to the third rat, but none showed signs of fear."

"They were blind."
"Very queer—all three of them too. Must have poisoned themselves somehow," said I. "Better catch and fling the beasts overboard," and with that I returned to the poop."

"The name of the ship was the Middlesex."
"We were a company of 15 men forward. The master was Captain Martin; James Fairman, first mate, and Alfred Tarbush is my name, second of her, as I think I told you."

"About a week after this incident of the rats the mate said to me, when I came on deck to relieve him:
"The carpenter and the cook are both complaining of their sight."

"The disease was wonderfully rapid with the poor fellows, for putting it that they complained on the Monday they were helplessly blind on the following Friday, sitting and crying, unable to move without being led."

"Now began the truly awful part of this tremendous incident of the ocean. It was not enough that Captain Martin should go dark that night, losing his sight till, as he told me, he couldn't see the flame of the cabin lamp as it swung in the little cuddy."

"At two bells in the middle watch, two nights after, it being my lookout, the poor unfortunate man came on deck and stood in the companionway, calling for the officer of the watch. I ran to him and asked him what I could do."

"He said:
"Give me your hand, Tarbush, and lead me to the ship's side and clear of the mizen channels. What's the vessel's rate of going?"

"About seven, sir. A handsome, regular sea, and the main royal on too. But is it so bad with you, captain, said I, as I led him to the rail according to his request, "Can you see nothing?"

"I'm blind," he gasped. "I'm blind. Look after the ship, sir. I'll call you when I wish to return below."

"I never suspected his intention, and the habit of duty amounts to an instinct in a seaman. I had no sooner reached the weather side of the deck than the man at the wheel yelled out:
"He's jumped!" and I heard a splash sound clear through the smooth shining of the foam alongside. The captain had sprung overboard."

"I fled to the rail.
"He was as much lost to us as though he had been a thousand miles off, and with a sick heart I kept the ship sailing on her course."

"The news had gone quickly enough in the past days that the captain was stricken with the disease of the eyes."

"But the suicide—for the giving up of a captain is like the giving up of a ship—was such a message of utter despair to them, with four or five already stone blind in the fore-cabin, fed and helped by their mates who could see, that some five or six of the men, with the boatswain at their head, came aft, seeing the mate and me talking together, and, after a deliberate, most earnest stare round the sea line, stepped up to us."

"Mr. Fairman," said the boatswain respectfully, "we're for asking of your leave to go away from this ship in that there longboat while we've got our sight."

"It's natural—it's natural," said the chief mate with a sort of generous warmth. "But consider, men, you are the main body of us who can see. If you go away in that longboat and those you leave behind you turn blind, what's to become of us if nothing happens in sight to take us off?"

"But we shall be turning blind along with the rest," said the boatswain, "if we stay. It's only a question of more or less blind men washing about in a ship."

"Could we stop the disease by jettisoning the cargo?" said I.

"It would be sending the men," answered the mate, "into the thickness of the poisonous steam itself—no." Then, working his hands with strange motions of agitation, he muttered, "My lads, it's an awful situation."

"Come along with us, sir," said one of the men, "you and Mr. Tarbush."

"And leave those who are blind?"

"I hate the thought of it myself," shouted the boatswain, "but if I go blind my wife and children will starve, and I must sit in the workhouse and be led around as if I was an old village idiot, and curse me if that thought isn't more frightful than the cruelty of leaving one's mates to perish."

"Go," said the mate, turning his back upon them. I followed, and together we slowly swept the ocean for a sail."

"That same day of the threat of the men to leave in the boat they went. They provisioned her handsomely, watered her almost to the wash strake, so careful were they."

"I think it was about 2 o'clock when they hoisted their lug and sailed away from the ship's side in a silence that seemed like the blindness that was in and upon the ship."

"I forget how many left the vessel in her, but I can recollect that when she was gone all that were left with the power of vision remaining in their eyeballs were Mr. Fairman, myself and three honest, stout-hearted English seamen, who said: 'Blast them if they was going to leave their mates to die of starvation through blindness. It might come to them; be it so, it should come a-finding of 'em doing of their dooty anyhow.'"

"I shook hands with those three men. They were seamen to sail round the world with—princes of their species. I don't say they are growing fever. I do say they were always scarce."

"It was very light, blue weather. We kept the ship under small sail ready for a shift, troubled as we were and very short handed, and the lie comes in here again and again," said the little sailor, tapping his head where he had stowed the newspaper, "when they speak of the vessel with all plain sail set having been fallen in with."

"We took turn and turn about to wait upon the poor blind men in the fore-cabin, and we fed them and led them about the decks, and we cut up tobacco for their pipes."

"Lord!" said he, "it was shocking to watch them staring at you with their eyes wide open, seeing nothing, then to feel that you might be the next!"

"It was a dreadful shock to me four days after the longboat had left us, when, at about five bells in the first watch, a quiet night and the ship clothed in white stealing very softly through the gloom, the mate came to my cabin and said to me in a low voice of horror:

"Tarbush, I am getting the blindness—it is coming on me!"

"Oh, don't say it! I cried, springing out of my bunk."

"I turned up the lamp. Look at that, is it clear?"

"No, it is a wavering, bluish flame. We ought to have left the ship," he said, and taken the blind men with us."

"He quitted my cabin in the groping way which was now familiar to me, and when I had dressed myself I went out expecting to find him on deck; instead, behold the poor man sat with his face lost in his arm upon the cuddy table."

"I touched him and told him to cheer up his heart."

"He never looked up. He just groaned as though he was dying of a broken heart and I passed up the steps to look after the vessel."

"The hush of the darkness was upon the ship, and I felt the blindness of the men in her, too, when I saw that the helmsman had let go of the wheel, letting the ship come to, so that she lay aback without way, with a little silky whispering of waters alongside."

"The man sat on the grating, and held his hands to his face. I grasped his shoulder, and he looked up and moaned almost as just as the mate had."

"Gracious powers!" thought I, "another visitation. It will be my turn next!"

"Terror possessed me, and I ran forward to get into the main shrouds and climbed as high as the mainmast, which I believed would be out of the reach of the fumes, and I lay in that top till daybreak, looking down upon the glimmering decks, wondering that the other three—three, I believe, kept their sight, but I will not be sure—did not show themselves that I might hail them and invite them to keep me company."

"However, it turned out as I had dreaded, for when at sunrise I went down on to the deck I found that the man who was stricken at the wheel had made his way to the fore-cabin and that the three whom I had imagined sight whole were seeing things through that same swimming, dusky, fluidlike medium which the others complained of."

"The mate was in the cabin and required to be fed."

"The men forward needed food, I turned to and lighted the galley fire

and cooked a plentiful breakfast and distributed the food so that the men could easily come at it, and then as speedily as I might, with my own share of breakfast in my pocket, I sprang again into the main shrouds for the safety of the top and had scarce arrived there when afar I beheld the smoke of a steamer."

"I watched that black film with dreadful eagerness."

"I thought I might turn blind even as I looked."

"Then, recollecting that no color was at our peak, I sank to the deck on a stay, rushed to the flag locker, sent aloft our biggest ensign inverted and made again, with the swiftness of the fear of the blindness and of death in my heart, for the maintop."

"The steamer was alongside of us in little more than an hour."

"She ranged close, imagining us derelict. I hailed her from the maintop and gave the captain our yarn, and he at once sent boats and took all hands off of us."

"That steamer's name," said the little sailor, "was the Eagle of Middlesbrough."

"And this is the sequel of this extraordinary story. Scarcely had the Eagle sunk the hull of the Middlesex out of sight, leaving her lying just as she had been left throughout the night from the moment when the helmsman lost his grip of the spokes, when another steamer called the Sea Queen of Newcastle-on-Tyne, heading in the wake of the Eagle, fell in with the bark and boarded her."

"Here, then, came in the mystery."

"A fine ship was found deserted in mid-ocean, signs of breakfast recently cooked in the galley, and eaten by men in the fore-cabin and by one or two aft, the galley fire still alight and making a good smoke in the mouth of its chimney, but not a soul aboard."

"Not a stain of blood to supply the riddle with a tragic solution. Her hold was tight."

"Her mate went aloft and hunted about the ocean everywhere in search of a boat. But nothing was visible save the fading trace of a steamer's light smoke or some delicate streak of cloud in the northeast."

"The galley fire burning was the puzzle. They took the bark in tow and carried her to a port, but the story," said the little sailor passionately, "is always wrongly told when it's written about."

"And now I hope, since you've taken it in hand, that the public will stick to my version of the puzzle, seeing that I was second mate of the bark and had to boss the blooming show at the end."

—New York World.

Resting Their Muscles.

When a man is tired, he stretches his arms and legs and yawns. Birds and animals, so far as possible, follow his example. Birds spread their feathers and also yawn, and fowls often do this. Fish yawn, they open their mouths slowly until they are round, the bones of the head seem to loosen and the gills open."

Dogs are inveterate yawners and stretchers, but seldom sneeze unless they have a cold. Cats are always stretching their bodies, legs and claws, as every one knows who has had a cat for a pet."

Horses stretch violently when and after indulging in a roll, but not as a rule on all four, as stags do. A stag when stretching sticks out his head, stretches his fore feet out and hollows his back and neck as though trying to creep under a bar."

Most ruminant animals stretch when they rise up after lying down. Deer do it regularly; so do cattle. This fact is so well known that if a cow when arising from lying down does not stretch herself it is a sign she is ill. The reason for this is plain—the stretch moves every muscle of the body, and if there is an injury anywhere it hurts.—San Francisco Examiner.

Feeling the Fable.

"I'm about bushed in the matter of 'curiosities,'" mused the owner of a small store. "It's a bad habit—this idea of drawing trade by making a museum of the window, but I can't stop now—business won't allow it."

A few hours later the soda water trade was rushing. The crowd outside the window gazed until it was thirsty at the remarkable bird that hung in a big cage. The card attached bore a handful of the alphabet hysterically put together and designed for a scientific name. After it were the words, "From Samoa."

A few days later the "curiosity" was feeding in the back yard with the rest of the bantam hens.—Detroit Free Press.

Practical jokers sometimes throw boomerangs. A case in point is that of a Texas sheriff, who found some buzzard eggs, which he took home, intending to tell his wife they were eggs of fine fowls and have her set them. His wife was out and he put them in the kitchen. After supper he told her of the fine eggs he had brought her, but nearly had a fit when she said she was sorry he had not told her earlier, as she had used the eggs in making an omelet, of which he had just eaten heartily. He has sworn off from playing practical jokes."

Nothing is eternal but that which is done for God and others. That which is done for self dies. Perhaps it is not wrong, but it perishes. You say it is pleasure—well, enjoy it. But joyous recollection is no longer joy. That which ends in self is morbid. That alone which goes out of self into God lasts forever."

A Beggars' trust is reported in New York. One man controls 40 mendicants, feeds, clothes and cares for them and handles their daily collections."

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THE HABITS OF FISH.

SALMON ARE THE FIGHTING ROMEO OF THE FINNY TRIBES.

Codfish Can Outdo the Goat and Ostrich Combined in Digestive Powers, and the Bluefish Is the Most Bloodthirsty Thing in Nature.

It is not too much to say that in some ways the love of salmon passes that of women. To reach the objects of their affection they perform feats and undergo hardships greater than any man could do or bear, and to maintain it they fight with a courage and fury which might make many a soldier envious.

The salmon trials begin when they first leave the sea on their long up river journey to meet their sweethearts. Presently perhaps they meet a high waterfall. Then the salmon backs away as far as possible, makes a locomotive-like rush and leaps for the top. He actually whizzes through the air, his tail moving like lightning, his scales shining like silver enamel. Perhaps he fails to reach the top by a foot, but he catches the water, hangs suspended for a moment and then with a miraculous strength forces his way up and reaches the quiet water beyond."

Perhaps the next waterfall is five feet higher, and the salmon leaps in vain. Then, finding the feat impossible, he actually climbs the sides, jumping up from ledge to ledge and resting in little pools until the river above is reached. Then he goes on, pushing through rapids and foaming over shallows until the spawning ground is reached. In many of the larger rivers of this continent the salmon is no beauty when he reaches his journey's end. His scales perhaps are worn off, his fins torn, and his body is a mass of bruises. But nevertheless he woos his ladylove boldly, caresses her tenderly, fights his rivals fiercely and wins his bride like a soldier."

But all fish are not so romantic. The codfish, for instance, is unsentimental and actually ridiculous. He is a great, gray, ugly fish, and his name itself is absurd. If there were such a thing as submarine humor, he would figure in it as the goat does in our own comics. The codfish has, in fact, an appetite which makes the goat's look pale, and when fishermen cut the fish open they assert that they often find such things as scissors, suspender buckles, horse-shoes, potato parings, oil cans, door-knobs, marlin spikes, corn-cobs and India rubber shoes."

Another startling story told by fishermen is that in heavy weather codfish eat stones to banish them, but it is more likely that these rocks are taken in while attached to sea anemones, of which the codfish are very fond. It may be inferred that codfish do not object to nibble the fingers or hands of human beings, because the wedding ring of a drowned woman was once found in a cod's stomach, and the finder got a big reward for its return."

Oysters and clams in the shell are very popular with the codfish, and there are vast heaps of dead shells in the ocean, "nested" together like strawberry boxes, which are believed to have once been in the stomachs of codfish. The appetites of these fish are insatiable. They will fill their stomachs, fill their gullets and fill their mouths with food and still try to get more."

If people knew more about the fish they eat, it is possible that a slice of "baked fish" might hit many a man with shuddering horror, for the bluefish is perhaps the most terrible and bloodthirsty thing in all nature. The tiger has a sweet and cheerful disposition compared to the bluefish, the shark seems a phlegmatic and amiable creature, and the wolf, by comparison, is positively mild. The bluefish make menhaden their special prey. When a school of these fish perceive bluefish near, they swim away with such terrific haste that the ocean foams under them, but the bluefish cannot be distanced. They rush among the helpless menhaden, biting, tearing, thrashing and even throwing them into the air."

They do not stop to swallow their prey, but kill purely for the love of slaughter. The sea is reddened with blood and dotted with dead fish, but bluefish kill on until exhaustion stops them or until the menhaden get into such shallow water that the bluefish do not care to follow. Sometimes these helpless fish are so blind with terror that they swim ashore and are piled up in windrows a foot deep."

The bluefish do not eat one-tenth of the fish they kill, although when surfed they are believed by some people to disgorge their food in order to take in another meal. It is estimated that during a fair season 1,000,000 bluefish are caught between New Jersey and Monomoy and that about 999,000,000 remain uncaught. Thirty or 40 fish are sometimes found in the stomach of one bluefish, but placing a bluefish's kill at only ten per day it will be seen that during their four months' yearly stay on the New England coast they destroy about 1,200,000,000,000 fish, and that is excluding the vast numbers of minute fish eaten by little bluefish, which are not included in the estimate. Carried into avoirdupois it is calculated that 2,500,000,000 pounds of fish are eaten daily, by bluefish. Nevertheless they are handsome and graceful fish. Very little is known of their other habits, but they are so nervous while in captivity that they develop corns on their noses by trying to push the latter through the glass sides of their tanks. —Los Angeles Times.

Too Common.
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Eagle Flights Rattler.

Tom Carson, a Scranton, Penn., sewing machine agent, rode down a mountain road near Deep Hollow a few days ago and saw a big fight between a rattlesnake and an eagle.

"I was riding leisurely," said Tom, "when I heard the shrill screams of an eagle, and, as I looked, he came down like a shooting star and lighted on a rattler five feet long. The bird was one of the largest bald eagles and the snake was a monster. The eagle, with its crest thrown back, ran up to the snake and gave it a blow over the head with its wings, that completely stunned it, just as it was in the act of striking at him with all its force. Quickly the eagle caught it in its talons, arose about twenty feet in the air, gave it a furious shaking and let it fall to the earth, where it lay coiled, rattling and hissing in great wrath."

"The eagle made a second attack in the same manner as before, but the snake watched its chances this time, and, when the eagle was close enough thrust its head between his head and wing, and, with a desperate effort, wound itself around the eagle's body, and it looked for a moment as though the powerful bird must die."

"But with a violent flap of his wings he broke the deadly embrace, caught the snake and gave it several jerks and threw it down again. Twice again the eagle carried the snake in the air and dashed it to the ground, each time giving it a furious shaking for a moment. Then, horsted, whirling slowly around the snake, and then, making a dash, carried it for the fourth time in the air, and when he dashed it down again it was dead. Then he gave it a final shake, seized it in his talons, and with a steady flight bore it to a crag, the highest in the neighborhood."

A Clear Right of Way.
When I first came into the mountains of West Virginia to look after the coal interests of our company, I boarded at a little tavern in the country town presided over by a good looking woman of 40 who, as I had understood, was a widow. She was keener witted and more entertaining than the average mountain woman and I rather enjoyed talking to her. One evening, after I had been her guest about three weeks, I found myself alone with her on the porch of the house, and we chatted along very pleasantly about men and women and life generally."

"Ain't you married?" she asked in response to something I had said leading up to such a question.

"Oh, no," I laughed. "I'm an unhappy old bachelor."

"Well, you oughter be ashamed of yourself," she said with spirit.

"I am," I assented. "But how is a man to be otherwise when the women won't do their share?"

"But they will if they ever get the chance," she contended.

"It's easy enough for you to say that," I said, "because you felt that way toward your husband when he asked you."

"My husband!" she almost shouted. "I haven't got no husband, nor never did have."

"Why—why," I stammered, "I understood you were a widow."

"Well, I ain't."

"Do you mean to tell me that as good looking a woman as you are is an old maid yet?"

She hesitated a moment before answering.

"In course I am," she said, and her voice softened, "but I hain't no objection to bein' a married woman."

"Goodness knows how I got out of it and still remained a 'sta-boarder,' but I did, and I didn't sit out on that porch in the evening any more, either."

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